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THE FOREIGN OFFICE SPOKESMAN MADE PUBLIC ON THE 29TH DECEMBER,
1937, THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT OF THE MILITARY AUTHORITIES
CONCERNING THE SHELLING OF THE BRITISH
MEN-OF-WAR AT WUHU.

Regarding the incident of shelling British men-of-war, it is regrettable that, despite earnest endeavours to find out real fact of the case, the investigation has been delayed on account of various troops having been scattered at the time and the consequent difficulty of establishing contact through lack of the means of communication. Immediately after the occurrence of the incident, the Army authorities despatched a staff officer of the Army Department of the Imperial Headquarters to carry on joint investigations on the spot with the authorities concerned there. The result so far obtained is as follows:

I. GENERAL SITUATION.

1. On December 11, the Japanese forces, in order to win the final victory after the fighting of more than a hundred days, closed in on the capital of China, Nanking, and having completed their frontal siege on land, they were vying with one another for the capture of its walls. Heavy fires broke out in the city, especially in the direction of Sialkwan and dense smoke overhung the Yangtze River.

On that day the Detachment X crossed the Yangtze to its left bank at a point north of Taiping, and advanced toward Fukow in order to intercept the Chinese forces retreating from Nanking.

Simultaneously the high commander and all his men of the Japanese force which had advanced close to the first line (to Xiaomihang Hill to the south of Yuhuntai) assuming that the only way open for the retreat of the hard-pressed enemy at Nanking would be by the river Yangtze, were all concentrating their attention on that direction. And in view of the fact that notice had already been served on the 8th December by the Japanese Consul General at Shanghai to the authorities of other Powers requesting the evacuation of their nationals from the zone of hostilities and that fighting had become so intense as above described, they did not even dream of the presence of any foreign vessels in the neighbourhood of the fighting area.

2. However, about 3:00 o'clock (Japan Time) on the afternoon of the same day more than ten large steamers were observed fleeing up the river from the direction of Siakwan. The said high commander, believing them to be the enemy in retreat, ordered the artillery corps nearby to fire on the ships. But the distance being too great, the shells did not reach the ships which continued their way upstream to the chagrin of all the Japanese soldiers.

Thereupon, the high commander sent order to the units which were expected to be in the neighbourhood of Wihu to attack these vessels.

II. THE ACTIONS OF THE DETACHMENT Z.

1. The Detachment Z, which was ordered to intercept the enemy's retreat, made a forced march through the night of the 11th and reached the neighbourhood of Wuhu between 7:30 and 8:30 o'clock on the morning of the 12th and occupied positions there.

On that day the weather was fine but there was dense fog from the morning. After a while the commander of the detachment discovered along the right bank of the Yangtze at a point about three kilometres to the north from his position four large steamers anchored, which appeared to be landing men by launches. Then, at about 9:00 o'clock he noticed some of these steamers suddenly begin sending up black smoke, whereupon the commander, deciding that the enemy was trying to hide behind smoke screen his sinister plan, ordered firing. Shells were seen striking the first and the second ships in the fore-front. However, the ships in the rear immediately fled downstream and vanished soon out of sight, while one of the ships at the front began to advance toward our forces. As she came nearer, a British flag on her was recognized. The commander of the detachment immediately ordered to cease firing. When the ship came along the pier at Wuhu, it was discovered that she was a British man-of-war, the Ladybird.

2. At about 10:00 o'clock one shell was fired by mistake at a ship hoisting the British flag which was coming from the upper stream, but it seemed to have passed high over the vessel. This ship, when arrived at the pier, was identified as the British man-of-war, the Bee.

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3. Rear-Admiral Holt who was aboard the Fox, the British Consul who was aboard the Ladybird, and several officers including captains of the ships landed and met the commander of the detachment.

At this meeting, the commander of the detachment said that as the British flag could not be discerned on account of the fog and as the ships were hidden behind a black smoke, he had believed the vessels to be enemy vessels. Furthermore, he stated, after explaining the circumstance regarding large numbers of defeated Chinese soldiers in the neighbourhood of Wihu at that time who were using the Yangtze for their retreat, he stated that it was the duty of his detachment to sink all enemy vessels on the river. The British thereupon requested the commander not to fire upon them thereafter, to which the commander agreed.

Then the British expressed their desire that, in order to forestall further danger, Japanese officers be put on board the British ships, but the commander declined to accede to this. At the request of the British, a Japanese captain was ordered to go on board the British man-of-war for the purpose of inspecting the neighbourhood. He saw behind a delta about eight kilometres down the stream six steamers and many junks loaded full of Europeans and Americans.

The commander of the detachment apologized for the casualties caused aboard the British man-of-war, lent some of his coolies for the handling of the dead and wounded, and sent as his proxies an infantry officer and an artillery officer to honour the British

dead at the funeral.

The British men-of-war stayed at the pier until about noon and then departed.

III. CONCLUSION.

As has been described above, it was not even ~~known~~ of, not only by the high commander on the spot but by all the units on the first line, that there might be any vessels of third Powers in the dangerous fighting area and at the time of severe battles, when, as a matter of fact, with a part of the Japanese forces already at Pukow across the Yangtze, the possible path of retreat for the Chinese forces was limited only to the Yangtze River.

Contrary to the judgment of our forces, the facts were that there were British ships in the fighting area. These ships not only could not be recognized as British on account of the dense fog but seemed to be landing retreating Chinese on the shore; moreover the movements of the ships were such as to make them appear to be trying to hide behind a smoke screen. In these circumstances the commander of the detachment issued order to fire at the vessels. The attack, therefore, was not made at all in the knowledge that the vessels were of British nationality. That the firing was entirely unintentional will be understood by those who know the actual conditions in a battle-field where occurrences of unexpected and extraordinary events are so numerous. All these circumstances notwithstanding, we sincerely regret that there should have taken place the present unfortunate affair.

C E R T I F I C A T E
Statement of Source and Authenticity

I, Kayashi, Kōru, Chief of the Archives Section, Japanese Foreign Office, hereby certify that the document hereto attached in English consisting of 5 pages and entitled "The Foreign Office Spokesman made public on the 26th December, 1937, the following Statement of the Military Authorities concerning the Shelling of the British War-Ship at Wuhan." is an exact and true copy of an official document of the Japanese Foreign Office.

Certified at Tokyo,
on this 5th day of April, 1947.

/s/ K. Kayashi
Signature of official

Witness: /s/ K. Urabe

西湖ニ於ケル英造砲事件旨ニ認スル陸軍當局ノ下記錄映畫
昭和十二年十二月二十八日外務省情報部長ニヨリ公表サル
西湖附近ニ於ケル英造砲事件ニ論シテハ銃意眞相調查ニ努メタルモ當
時部隊各所ニ分散シ通信聯絡亦憲ノ如クナラサリシタメ之カ調査遂延セ
シハ遠隔ナリ當局ハ事件發生後直チニ大本營陸軍部參謀ヲ派遣シ現地査
証ト協力調查ノ結果知リ待タル所左ノ如シ。

一、一般ノ情況

一、十二月十一日皇軍ハ征駆百日ノ結果ヲ此一擧ニ極ムヘク、長驅敵首
都南京ニ近迫シ、既ニ韓正面ノ包囲ヲ完成シ諸隊奮進シテ城壁ノ奪取
ヲ成ヒ、市街等ニ下關方面ハ兵火燃ンニ起り黑煙江上ヲ蓋フ。
○○支國ハ此日太平府北方ニ於テ楊子江左岸ニ渡河シ浦口方面ニ前進
シテ南京ニ在ル敵ノ最後ノ退路ヲ遮断セントセリ。
當時第一線ニ近ク（雨花臺南方小不行高地）進出シテ戰鬪ヲ指揮シア
リシ高級指揮官以下何レモ南京ニ崩壊セル敵ノ唯一ノ退路ハ既ニ唯物
子江ノミナルヘキヲ察シ之ニ對シ注意ヲ集中シアリタリ、而シテ十二

月九日列國ニ到シテハ我上海總領事ヨリ、交駁地域外ニ移動セラレタ
キ旨ノ通告ヲ奉達シアリ而モ取況ノ如ク切迫セル時、外國艦船力尙
此附近據據ニ存在スヘシトハ全ク夢想タニセサリシ所ナリ。

二、然ルニ午後三時（日本時間、以下同シ）頃果然十數隻ノ大型汽船下
西方向ヨリ蒸氣ヲ吐キテ上流ニ逃走スルヲ認メ高級海軍官ハ必然敵ノ
追御ト認メ直ニ附近ノ砲兵部隊ヲシテ射擊セシム然ルニ隨處砲臺ニシ
テ砲兵着遠セス數船ハ悉々トシテ逆行ヲ續ケ艦ル者皆切齒罵罵セリ。
茲ニ於テ高級海軍官ハ直ニ當時通商附近ニ在リト認悉セラレタル部隊
ニ對シ之等船艇ノ逐滅ヲ命ス。

二、〇〇支隊行動

一、敵ノ逃路通商ヲ命セラレタル〇〇支隊ハ十一日夜行軍ニ以テ南行シ
一二日午前七時三十分乃至八時二十分ノ間ニ燕窩附近ニ到着シテ陣地
ヲ占領セリ。

コノ日期來晴天ナルモ、飛機シ觀テ支隊長ハ、陣地ノ北方約二千楊子

江右岸ニ四個ノ大型汽船碇泊セルヲ認メ、且「ランテ」ヲ以テ人員ヲ上陸セシメアルカ如キ行動ヲ見ル、斯クスル内（午前九時張此等汽船ノ一部或ニ蒸氣ヲ吐キ出シタルヲ以テ文隊長ハ敵カ志述煙幕ニヨリ企圖ヲ察シセントスルモノト判斷シ射擊ヲ命ス彈丸ハ、先頭及ヒ第二ノ汽船ニ命中スルヲ認メシカ、後方ニ在リシ船ハ直テニ下流方向ニ退却シテ影ヲ没シ、先頭ニ在リシ一隻ハ我方ニ向ヒ前述シ來リ、近接スルニ從ヒ英國旗ヲ認メシヲ以テ文隊長ハ直ニ射擊ヲ中止セシメタリ、敵船無事機雷ニ接着スルニ及ヒ之英國軍艦「レディ。バード」號ナルコトヲ知レリ。

二、午前十時頃英國旗ヲ掲タル一船上流ヨリ最近シ來レル時一彈ヲ該發セシモ機丸ハ高ク船上ヲ飛越シタルモノノ如シ。該船モ同シク機雷ニ接着セシカ之大體「ビー」號ナリキ。

三、「ビー」號ニ坐乗セル「ホルツ」少將「レディ。バード」號ニ在リシ英國領事ソノ他海長士官等數名ハ上陸シ文隊長ト會見ス。

支隊長ハ「駆逐ノタメ英艦旗ヲ元ルコト能ハス且無煙ニテ遮蔽セルヲ以テコレヲ敵艦ト思惟セリ」ト答へ且當時無湖附近ニ支那ノ敗残兵多ク、コレラノ楊子江ヲ利用シアル情況ヲ説明シ支隊ハ楊子江上ノ敵船艦ハ然ク奉究スヘキ任務ヲ有スル旨ヲ述ヘタリ。

英艦側ハ情況ノ判明スルヤ軍令威ヲ張ラケ、兩後射撃セサル如ク要求セシヲ以テ支隊長之ヲ承認ス。

英艦側ハ今後ノ危険ヲ警戒スルタメ我士官兵ヲ乘船セシムル様希望セシモ支隊長ハ已ニ英艦ナルコト明確ナルニ就キ其必要ナカルヘシト主張セリ然レトモ英艦側ノ希望ニ從ヒ一大尉ヲ英艦ニ搭乘セシメテ視察ニ赴カシメタルニ、下流約八千ロ附近中流ノ處ニ汽船六隻、多數ノ「ジヤンク」アリ、敵水人ヲ交ヘ又那人ヲ捕獲セルヲ見タリ支隊長ハ英艦ノ死傷者ニ對シ遺憾ノ意ヲ表スルト共ニ之ヲ感嘆ノタメ言力ヲ發揮シ且歩、砲兵將校各一ヲ代表トシテ曾幾シメタリ。

英艦ハ正午頃迄行船ニ在リシカ後出航セリ。

城上ノ如ク南京ハ包囲セラレ我軍ノ一部ハ既ニ對岸港口ニ在リ故況運メ
テ切迫シ又號軍ノ過半力僅カニ初予江ノミニ限定セラレアリシ當時現地
高級指揮官ハ勿論第一線部隊ニ至ル迄此危險ナル交駁區域ニハ第三國艦
船ノ存有スルカ如キコトハ全然夢想タニセサリシ所ナリ。

然ルニ事實ノ情況ハ我方ノ先遣ト相應シテ英艦船ハ對岸内ニ介在シタル
モ機動ノタメ英艦船タルヲ離別シ得ス而モ遅却セル誠ノ江岸ニ上陸スル
カ如キ狀況ヲ茲シ且煙幕ニヨリ其行動ヲ祕匿スルカ如キ狀況ナリシラ以
テ文隊長カ射擊ヲ命スルニ至リシモノニシテ斷シテ當先ニ於ケル感情ニ
ヨリ英艦破船ト知リツツ射擊セルモノニアラス又此間毫モ故意乃至痴狂
者ノ行爲ト認ムヘキ事在ナキハ克ク深淵多キ機場ノ實相ヲ理解スルモ
ノノ首肯シ得ル所ナルヘシ、然レトモソノ結果ニオイテ不幸ナル今次事
件ノ起証ヲ見ルニ至リシハ海ニ達認トスル所ナリ。

文書ノ出所並ニ成立ニ關スル證明書

目分、林 肇 ハ外務省文書課長ノ職ニ居ル者ナル處、茲ニ添付セラレタル日本語ニ依ツテ書カレ五頁ヨリ成ル英艦砲擊事件ニ關スル大本營陸軍部發表（昭和十二年十二月二十八日）ト題スル書類ハ日本政府（外務省）ノ保管ニ係ル公文書ノ正確ニシテ眞實ナル爲シナルコトヲ證明ス

昭和二十二年四月五日 於東京

林

肇

右卷名捺印ハ自分ノ面前ニ於テ爲サレタリ

同日於同所

立會人

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部

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